

Why All The Suffering?

*“That no man should be moved by these afflictions:
for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.”*

1 Thessalonians 3:3 (NIV)

A wise person once said, “Suffering is having what you do not want or not having what you do want.” Some of us are independent of others for our daily needs but struggle under other pressures, others of us are poor and dependent on others for our daily bread but we long to be financially independent.

This describes so many people in our time. We long for peace and go on living in turmoil or we find circumstances tie us down and prevent us from being or doing what we want.

Dissatisfaction with life is pervasive. Movie stars have more money than they can spend so they get what they want. However, many of them go through marriage partners the same way we go through family cars. They swap partners every few years so they have what they want only to discover a few years later that what they wanted is now unwanted.

A time tested rule is that money does not usually bring happiness with it. Of course a lot of people want to get lots of money to try and prove that

rule wrong. Sadly, as we look at many of the world’s wealthiest people we find they are also often among the most unhappy people in the world.

When we look at people who have journeyed through life with serious limitations they are often the happiest of people. Somehow this reality doesn’t seem possible. How can people be happy when they are poor, have health issues, or lose loved ones early in life?

In Luke 12:15 we hear Jesus say, “Your life does not consist in the abundance of things you possess.” Here is the One Who possesses all things (Colossians 1:16) and He tells us that material wealth is not the key to a fulfilling life.

Jesus should know what makes for a great life because His life was full and rich with really great treasures. Though He was poor He made many eternally rich. Although He was mocked, scorned and finally murdered by jealous people, He provided the basis for an eternal relationship of joy and love with our Creator.

Of all people, Jesus knew that to gain lasting satisfaction in life we must die to ourselves and give ourselves in the service of others. The path that leads to the life of eternal joy is the one that takes us through temporary valleys of tears.

A slogan that some physiotherapists use with their clients who are recuperating from surgery is, “No pain, no gain.” This group of health professionals regard the pain of exercising as necessary to recuperation. In the spiritual realm it is the same. For us to grow into the image of Jesus we must be subject to adversity.

God our Father faithfully leads His children through sorrow into joy. Why the pain? It is the gateway to life. Paul wrote, “For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18 (NIV)